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ABSTRACT

The issue of certification is a crucial one for psychologists. The advantages of such certification might seem to be a sanctioned status in the community, a specific set of courses for students leading to a specific title, and possibly an edge in a highly competitive job market. But the sort of training implied by certification implies learning a very specific set of skills, for very specific problems, which are transferable and will lead to precise performance and predictable outcomes. It suggests a technology, and with it the related tendency to obsolescence. Education, on the other hand, involves being informed about the current state of knowledge, whatever it is, and knowing how to stay informed. It implies that what is transferable are not specific skills but non-specific competencies. Training suggests professionals, specialization and licensing. Education suggests inquiry, adaptability, flexibility, and cross-disciplinary fertilization, which are hard to license. In the long run, education, not training, is what community psychologists need, and it is in this direction--not that of training and certification--that future programs should move. (Author/BP)

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# Education, Training, and Dealing with the Contingent Future*

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In the time alloted me today I want to present a few personal observations on the future of training and education in Community Psychology. What I have to say could well be said about graduate and undergraduate education more generally, but I shall focus my remarks on the special problems of Community Psychology because that is what we are here to discuss today. The context for these remarks is the strong movement in the American Psychological Association toward professionalization of all psychological specialties and the perceived need to license everyone and accredit every program. Although it may not yet be obvious to them, this movement will ultimately affect all psychologists, regardless of their specialty or work setting.

While these observations come in part from my work within the pyramid model which Ed Seidman and I have used as a vehicle for action and research with our students (Seidman & Rappaport, 1974), I will have little to say about that model. I would be pleased, if discussion so leads, to describe some of those experiences that have led me to the conclusion that I present you with now--that we ought to be educating, rather than training our students and that we ought to resist the temptations of the licensing movement.

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*This paper is based on two symposia presentations at the 86th Meeting of the American Psychological Association in Toronto, August 1978: Austin Plus Three (I. Iscoe, ch.) and Licensing, Accreditation and the Public Interest (S. Danish, ch.).

What I have to say today is not comforting, and I have no illusions about its popularity, or about how to solve some of the pragmatic problems of professional survival which my position purposely avoids.

My remarks are aimed primarily at those who work in university settings. Nevertheless, for those who would seek employment in other settings (e.g., schools, courts, mental health and other government agencies) there are serious implications. It would mean that how to be sanctioned to practice in the role of community psychologists, what titles to have, or courses to take, would remain much more an individual program and an individual student matter than a collective problem to be handled by a monolithic accreditation agency. It would mean selling yourself on the basis of what you can do, not your degree,because what a university would provide you with would be education, not certification. I recognize that you will be competing with others who are a certified "something", and because of that competition we will be under great pressure to certify you too. I think we should resist. If this means few people willing to risk the role of community psychologist, so be it. The role may require high risk taking.

I believe that at this time we are faced with a clear choice point on the road being built by community psychology. We must choose between education and training. The choice is ours, the future is contingent on the decisions we make now, and the next generation of psychologists is waiting to drive down the road in the direction we choose. They can be trained or educated, and which it is will in turn determine the choices they will make in the contingent future.

At this point in our intellectual history, despite 20 years of dissatisfaction with the ways of thinking about and means for dealing with social, interpersonal, mental health, criminal justice, and education, new ways of looking at these problems have not been able to tell us what to do so precisely that we have any detailed technological and therefore appropriate training models. What we may have are educational models, what we do not have are training models. . .the Austin Conference (Iscoe, Bloom & Spielberger, 1977) notwithstanding. In our field, training may simply be inappropriate.

I want to distinguish between education and training. Training implies that I have a set of very specific skills, for very specific problems, and it implies that given proper instruction these are transferable and will lead to precise performance and predictable outcomes. It suggests a technology (and of course the related tendency to obsolescence).

Education, on the other hand, is a matter of being informed about the current state of knowledge, whatever it is, and knowing how to stay informed. It implies that what is transferable, given proper instruction, are not specific skills so much as non-specific competencies. Education enables one to think about a variety of problems in a variety of ways. Training suggests professionals, specializing and licensed. Education suggests inquiry, adaptability, and flexibility, including cross disciplinary fertilization, which is difficult to license.

It is difficult to imagine licensing someone as educated. Indeed, the idea itself is artificial. It is imposed upon us today by external pressures that have nothing to do with education. It has a great deal to do, however, with professionalization and guild interests, and jobs for our students.

I am all for people earning a living, but there are many ways to do that, and the creation of a new profession may not be the best. It would be a mistake in social policy. It would mean a future determined by trained rather than educated people.

The choice we face today at Austin plus three (one we successfully avoided in 1975) is between going the route of training professionals or of fostering education and the pursuit of knowledge. I submit that training is not only premature but inappropriate in our field. But the big money is on training and professionalization. National health insurance is just around the corner and now is the time to look out for number one. All over the A.P.A. licensing and credentialing is on everyone's agenda. Universities are always being pressured to turn away from inquiry and become screening and employment services.

The problem we must confront is one which is true for general undergraduate education as well as for graduate education. The two are related. An undergraduate does not magically change the day she or he becomes a graduate student and we must pay attention to this fact. In addition, undergraduates become a large segment of "the public", and we always talk of "public education."

If we believe in the ideals of inquiry and change, the pursuit of new ideas, and continuous questioning of ourselves and our society's assumptions (a role which has always been prominent in Community Psychology), then we are going to have to face the fact that we will not be popular and may even loose some of our resources.

Education (as opposed to training) is already in general disrepute, and I believe that those of us who teach are at fault because we have all

too often substituted training in the facts for educating; and our students have believed us.

I have the sense that today's student and all those thousands of graduates who are not supporting their local colleges and universities do not understand what education is because they never received an education while they were in college. We never gave them one. They are not opposed to education, they simply don't know what it is. They are opposed to their recollection of a university as it so often functions: a game to be played as an access to opportunities in the "real" world; a hurdle like so many fraternity rites to be endured, and union dues to be paid. They learn to live and to think and to work and to search after college or after professional or graduate school; and for most, what they learned (the facts, the exams) is pretty irrelevant to their jobs and their lives. The same is true for many state licensing exams. What they learned may be irrelevant to education as well.

Robert Pirsig, in his popular book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" makes a similar point; and I don't think the book would be nearly so popular if it did not touch a cord in the heart of many college graduates. I want to quote him not because his is necessarily the most scholarly analysis of the problem, but precisely because it is apparently making sense to so many people. He describes a disenchanted professor's lecture on what he calls "The Church of Reason;"

> It begins with a reference to a newspaper article about a country church building with an electric beer sign hanging right over the front entrance. The building had been sold and was being used as a bar. . .The article said a number of people had complained to the church officials about it. It had been a Catholic church, and the priest who had been delegated to respond to the criticism had sounded quite irritated about the whole thing. To him it had revealed an incredible ignorance of what a church really was. Did they think that bricks and boards and glass constituted a church?

> Or the shape of the roof? Here posing as piety was an example of the very materialism the church opposed. The building in question was not holy ground. It had been desanctified. That was the end of it. The beer sign resided over a bar, not a church, and those who couldn't tell the difference were simply revealing something about themselves. . .the same confusion exist(s) about the university . . .the real university is not a material object. It is not a group of buildings. . .
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> . . .The real university. . .has no specific location. It owns no property, pays no salaries and receives no material dues. The real university is a state of mind. It is that great heritage of rational thought that has been brought down to us through the centuries and which does not exist at any specific location. It's a state of mind which is regenerated throughout the centuries by a body of people who traditionally carry the title of professor, but even that title is not part of the real university. The real university is nothing less than the continuing body of reason itself.
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> In addition to this state of mind, "reason", there's a legal entity which is unfortunately called by the same name but which is quite another thing. This is a nonprofit corporation, a branch of the state with a specific address. It owns property, is capable of paying salaries, of receiving money and of responding to legislative pressure in the process.
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> But this second university, the legal corporation, cannot teach, does not generate new knowledge or evaluate ideas. It is not the real university at all. It is just a church building, the setting, the location at which conditions have been made favorable for the real church to exist.

What I have come to suspect is that many of us have now confused the buildings of the university, the classrooms, the tests, and so on, with the State of Mind. The form is confused with the meaning. I am afraid that many of us who have been a part of the university system have in fact told our students that courses in classrooms and exams and degrees and licenses and such trivia are education.

Currently, we run a great risk in our graduate education in Psychology. The movement to license and credential and accredit both people and whole specialties, even departments, is powerful, popular and sensible--sensible for the building of a profession and the protection of our guild interests. I hope that community psychology will not go this route.

Ironically, the scientist image--often thought to conflict in Psychology with the professional movement--may also contribute to this tendency. Given our desire to be like natural scientists and like engineers, who are esteemed as "problem solvers", we psychologists have a tendency to think in terms of solutions to social problems by means of packaged interventions and/or courses, programs, and training, approved, tested, stamped as "evaluated." Given the internal characteristics of human service and educational organizations (let alone the larger social environment with which such open systems must have commerce) it may not be sensible to strive for the selling of experimentally sanctioned interventions as supermarket style cellophane packages of supposedly transportable programs for adoption. Yet most of our efforts to work on social problems have assumed that, like the technological innovations of natural science and engineering, the solutions and the physical characteristics of the "package" we develop are identical. If, as seems likely in our field, the transactions between participants, the values, the rules of the game, ideology and metacommunications are a significant portion of human organizations and programs, then the assumption that this may be expressed in simple physical terms, transportable in some automatic fashion by a licensed professional who has had the right courses, is a faulty one.

As I have argued elsewhere (Rappaport, 1977), although there are many programs, roles and functions potentially useful for a community psychology, they are not all learned in the psychology department. Persons engaged in this work require flexibility, willingness to change and react to feedback, and continual reevaluation rather than reification. To create a profession with static roles, techniques, programs and methods would be simply that: It would create a new profession. Training programs must

resist "protection of turf"--in favor of fostering problem solving skills which appreciate the contributions of those with various backgrounds and education, including those without formal degrees.

Change is a continuous process, not an end product, and those who would foster it will need to change themselves as well. Licensing of community psychologists is undesirable--Such licensing of those who complete a "certified" training program would only create another vested interest profession. Those who seek structure and flee ambiguity should not be able to find comfort in community psychology. Job descriptions will change, be created and dissolve as the community psychologist learns his or her trade and pursues an evolving career. The issue is not what our students are called, but what they do. And what they do must remain flexible and adaptive to local needs and knowledge from all disciplines. If we have special skills to learn they should be in evaluation methodology, problem solving, social policy and value analysis, and the ability to listen to and represent diverse community groups. The skills are political as well as academic, social as well as psychological and they are not of the sort to be licensed.

Education in such skills will require a great deal of experience in diverse settings, combined with research experience while the student is still in school. In addition, a broad background in historical and political issues, as well as philosophy of science and human values in necessary. What has been thought of as a "liberal education" must be combined with field research and direct participation in one's own community. It is the unique combination of collaborative social intervention that appreciates the already existing strengths and skills in a community, and in other disciplines, together with careful description and evaluation which may be the special

province of a community psychology. It also requires willingness to be a self as well as a social critic. This requires, not trained, but educated men and women. I hope we have the willingness to risk such education.